

Pinner Green

Blessings Disguised, 1981-1987

Setting the Scene

In the eighties British society was, in-crisis. It was not just felt within the industrial sector, but in law and order and race relations. Undoubtedly, the standard of living for the majority of people was greater... mine, certainly was – particularly now - being a freelance colour retoucher as well as maintaining a full-time lecturing post. With this increase in wealth, for the majority, my own included, came greater personal stress – brought on by changes in working arrangements, moral values, mores, and social relationships. Society's libertarian attitudes towards: the break-up of marriage, its social welfare benefits - especially for children and the handicapped, reforms allowing greater rights for women, regarding abortion and property rights, and for homosexuals 'coming out'. This all lead to a freer less restrictive society. These benefits and personal freedoms brought greater responsibilities to the individual... not always easily coped with... something I was going to have to contend with...

Trying to retain some sort of mental cohesion after hearing those terrible words *I love somebody else,* bounced around in my head blotting out everyday matters and daily words of care, which I should have been directing towards my children. It made me feel physically sick. Personal fortunes - financial and social, would plummet, as the true realisation of that terrible Christmas 1980, slowly took its hold. My days seemed to pass with a permanent racing heartbeat and a sense of panic... I was not aware of all the consequences these feelings were to have although judging from the sinking feeling in my stomach it did not herald a bright future nor predict much contentment.

I had grown use to my wife's challenging statements which were proceeded by piercing eyes, head thrust forward and dismissive expression – these postures were often meant to draw out a rejoinder and stimulate an unequal debate in the adversary - to those who were not aware what was expected – how to deal with the challenge.

You may well try to imagine that awful night... going to bed, knowing that in the morning your children were to wake up to welcome Christmas Day... and that you would be expected to show bonhomie and good cheer... but knowing that your marriage was in tatters and the bottom had dropped out of your world. There I lay; next to my wife, staring into a black void... life was never to be the same again. The unexpected and previously unimaginable happening had occurred...

Gradually over the next few weeks, I pulled myself together with the help of my mother-in-law, brother, neighbours, and friends at work; but it was not easy trying to put a brave face on life whilst giving lectures and trying to teach... Often, I would hear myself speak, and wonder, 'what on earth I was talking about?' From the following January till May I tried to find a way to continue living with the terrible realisation that my life was to change irrevocably - that enormous emotional changes were to take place, especially if I were to remain living in the same house with Sally. After much personal thought talking the matter through with Rita - Sally's mother, the decision was made, I would remove myself and find somewhere locally where the children could visit and perhaps move in – if they felt the need or on a fixed rota. It did not take long to find a new home, furnishing it with second-hand furniture - from the council's house clearance warehouse at Rayners Lane, and move out.

While all this was going on, General Galtieri of Argentina stole a march on the British government and invaded the Falkland Islands. There was much flag waving and cheering when Mrs Thatcher commissioned the military to retake the Islands. It was assumed, by the country, that there must be far more in the objective - to take back the islands, than to regain a bleak and barren, rain and wind swept, group of islands! For me, it created a diversion from my dreadful home life. The war, for this

is what it was to become, lasted from April 1982 until July of that year. The following year the election saw Mrs Thatcher and the Conservatives regain office mostly on the back of a successful mission. My legal separation was to find an end in divorce... and loss of custody... with all the heartache and resentful aftermath. Many stories from other divorced men told how they had lost the bulk of their investments and financial security... never to be able to gather a lump sum together again - to get back to a previously held position. It was impossible to know then, or to appreciate, until much later, how seriously this tragedy was going to affect all... In retrospect, it was to lead to broken extended family relations, torn personal friendships, and to a build up, over many years, of resentments that would last for a lifetime. As to my own feeling of self worth - that would suffer too, losing: confidence, my earned feel good factor gained over many years of management, the religious teachings and trust in my fellow man, my mental and physical well being... All would suffer an irreparable blow. The unbearable daily reminder of what had happened forced me to distance myself - away from its heart-bruising blows, to purchase my own property... even with its attendant crippling mortgage repayments. I believed that a new home would provide security; it would set me a goal and give something to hold onto in my rapidly disintegrating world! The removal of the workshop to a new base - to continue with my freelance work, was a 'god's send', for it made the whole enterprise possible. The planning, daily reminders of things to be done - to bring about my change of home, and the sheer joy of positive action drove me forward... they were days of sweet dreams nothing could destroy. Then my re-marriage - the pleasure of finding a 'like minded soul' who was looking for all that I was seeking. The sharing of all the difficulties of life whilst planning for a more secure future, contributed to the repair job needed to bring about something I had lost - my being. Josephine's family welcomed their mother's happiness - the entry into their home of a stepfather... It so pleased them that they made every effort to show I was part of their world; this welcoming gesture included her parents, brother, and friends. I knew I was very lucky and thanked god for giving me another chance to find a life-long partner!

The ever-changing print industry, working its way through a revolution - continually altering work routines and methods, all contributed to my position at the college being undermined. New technologies directed students away from craftwork towards Information Technology and the computer. The local authorities, who put into place early retirement practices, acknowledged these changes. It fitted into my new family's future. Sometimes in life certain events happen, which appear to be ordained... this was one such happening, a coming together of a series of events that gave meaning and direction...

CHAPTER I

Taken by surprise – Christmas cheer - Coming to terms – Effect on the children – Solicitor - Custody - Family Welfare - Social Worker – Setting up my own studio – Help at College – Leaving home – Rita's loan – Mortgage - Finding a new home...

Sally's reply to my question, "why are you so late?" made me catch my breath... It was not the answer I expected...! All over that Christmas vacation, I gave way to feelings of desolation... Thoughts about all those past exciting, frustrating, and annoying times, twenty-three years of married life, six children and a circle of friends, overlaid now by feelings of anger... I was distressed, felt painfully let down, - and deserted. These negative feelings churned away inside me – destroying hopes, clouding dreams and smothering ambitions...

It is strange fact that even though there were all these depressing thoughts running through my head, overlaying them all was a positive, fixed, never to be altered resolve... *there was going to be an end to it all, and I was going to make out...!*

I did make overtures to Sally, to try to rekindle past affections, but in my heart of hearts I was just going through the motions... nothing – word or deed, would take away those

hateful words...! Had her words been the only cause of disagreement I might have gone through a cooling off period but they were not. Sally had no interest in cultural things, no lover of the world's science, home improvements, or joy at nature's blessings. Not having any more babies left a void in her that could not, would not be filled... it was an obsession - logic and reasonableness would not counter its grinding daily pressure.

The silence of Sally's rejection spoke volumes. There is nothing so completely dead to the human spirit as rejection, however much affection there may have been in the past... I could see from Sally's demeanour, I no longer counted - was a back number. This was no media soap opera, where it was all to come right in the end. This was harsh reality and it hurt. Any hopes of relying on her steadfastness, commitment, fortitude, and onetime staunch Christian upbringing, now dead. My calls for sympathy and kindness answered only by her distant cold stare. During those days and hours - over the Christmas period, the light of hope dimmed further, if that was at all possible... she became even more detached, could only find solace out of the house - away from the demands of motherhood and parental responsibility... away from where no child sought her milk.

I think all the children were in a state of shock... much as I. There had been a slow but definite deterioration in each child's bond with each other over the last couple of years. As they had grown up the lack of privacy and personal space was to have a profound effect, all became withdrawn - operating in a small world around their own possessions and interests. This affected all at home, except Simon, who was away at university. They looked to me to be strong and supportive, but I was at that moment wrapped up in my own misery, which, coming on top of the stressful conditions at work - having to study technical processes

and collect academic qualifications, grated at my inner being. It was a house of tension, where hardly a kind word was spoken.

As Simon was away at university David was the senior child, I looked to him for support...! Rachel, my eldest daughter, was coming up to eighteen – should have been quite capable of taking control of the household, in times of need. It wasn't that there was a scarcity of adults around the younger ones. The trouble was relationships were fractured. The eldest, should have demonstrate a responsible attitude – giving the younger ones good behaviour to copy; show care and consideration, by being sure and steadfast. Living so close together made for unreasonableness – petty squabbles about personal space – nowhere to go for peace and quiet, the eldest asserting their preferences, by right of seniority.

However, there was no way I was going to be party to this continuing collapse – it was not going to stay that way forever. The final darkness was about to lighten - a glimmer appeared... for there, right at the end of the tunnel, a pinprick of light... My goal - which was to survive, remained firm... It premised on, staying firm and not giving way. I had to get myself into a position where I could give that care to the younger children without it being undermined.

What a proper pickle - six children, the eldest almost twenty-one, and the youngest coming up to twelve. We had this size of family because it was what Sally wanted – insisted on. 'Just one more', she repeatedly said... 'After all, we don't have to buy anything, its all here, ready!' I had gone along with it because she was so adamant - she enjoyed the weaning, closeness, vulnerability, and helplessness of her own babies, toddlers and young children... I stupidly thought this would make her settled, content and committed – devoted to the children, to me, and to family life. However, her mental state demanded more, however

detrimentally that decision was to be for everyone else. Her mother and Aunt were very much against a larger family – I most certainly had supporters; but it was no good, it was a challenge and something she craved for - of her own, a score to tot up...

Although concerned about the finances of the family, particularly when it came to extra curricular activities - not for one moment contemplating private education... all my plans - for educational holidays and trips aboard, in jeopardy. We had a camping holiday in France booked which Sally said she wanted to continue with. I could not see how we could possibly go in our present parlous state, so I cancelled the booking.

My first call for commiseration was on Boxing Day. Rita, my mother-in-law, was the only person who knew the family intimately and naturally knew her daughter better than anyone did. I knew that Sally often went round to her mother's house during her lunch break and it was rare for her not to have weekly contact. I explained to her what had happened. She replied that it did not come as a total surprise - she knew that Sally had been unhappy, frustrated and bored... and could do nothing to dispel those feelings of 'wanting excitement...' Rita had had to cope with Sally's emotional outbursts before... they provoked each other. Over the next few weeks, Rita explained what she knew about Sally's adventures. I did wonder why she hadn't relayed them to me before, but it was too late for recriminations.

All over that Christmas period I had numerous conversations with Sally about what she wanted to happen; what she had planned to do; how we were to run the family with her wanting to be with someone else. She could not answer any of my questions other than to keep on repeating that she loved this other man, and that he wanted her; but that in the meantime we should carry on as before, until she had worked out what she intended to do. She wanted me to carry on and do exactly as I

had done so for many years except there would be no physical intercourse. I said that I was not prepared to accept that. Sally had told me a number of times throughout our marriage that she preferred more macho, muscular and domineering men – to sexually excitement her. Perhaps this was what she was seeking now.

I resolved to find out about Sally's hidden life - so I could decide how serious it all was, thereafter, plan... I was in shock... never suspecting, that this had been going on for so long – having placed total confidence in Sally - relying on her to do everything that was best for the family.

Fortunately, I was on college vacation - I could take all day to look into the situation and be able to contact anyone I chose... I met and talked to everyone, the neighbours, her work- mates, past friends and relations. I followed her by car and by foot... to work, from work, when she went to play squash... this over a period of three weeks - the whole holiday period...

I discovered who the friend was and where he lived... parking outside I reached for the front door bell and rang. He invited me in as if expected - exactly as if I were on a social call... He gave me a cup of coffee and a cigarette. We had a long talk - he explained how it had all come about, about his wife's bad health – her arthritis and subsequent death - after a long illness. He explained about his son's unhappiness – blamed his father for much of his mother's distress, to the degree that he detested his father and lived in his car outside the bungalow - refused to enter... or have anything to do with him.

Michael went on to say that, he worked voluntarily for the Arthritic and Rheumatism Club at Northwick Park Hospital - devising ways to finance the charity. He was the chair of the club and had met Sally when she approached the organization to help with the voluntary work. When it was discovered that Sally

worked full-time for the A&R unit during the day - as a secretary, she was asked if she would be the clubs secretary. He said that his and Sally's feeling about each other was mutually held - driven by having similar interests and experiences. She had said to him that she was living a very separate life - from her husband, who was in agreement with her life-style. I explained that this was not so, that I loved my wife and children, and that Sally had given no indication that she wanted a separate existence. However, he continued to say that he was going to do nothing about the situation, 'it was up to Sally', he was quite happy for her to live with him but he didn't want anything to do with the children - he was going to carry with his life in exactly the same way...

It was strange... he was very unfeeling about causing other people unhappiness, and a possible break-up of a family. He was casual and unconcerned. It was a strange conversation; as if he had no concern about how I was feeling, having no regard for the effect this would have on the children. He was in no moral dilemma... he acted as if it was all perfectly normal and natural, had no fear of what I might do, treating the whole affair quite casually, unconcerned as to the effect his actions might take.

I confronted Sally with all my discoveries. I asked her to leave if she wished to carry on seeing him or if she was so unhappy with life at Norwood Drive. She replied that she had no intention of leaving or of giving up seeing her friend that I could carry on doing what I had been doing all along - that I must put up with the situation. I pointed out that there was no way I would do that. She went on to rub more salt in my wounds by saying that all the presents I had given her had pushed her away... It was a parting shot, guaranteed to hurt...! Now I understood the position and where my future was to be found.

Immediately after Christmas, I went to a Solicitor in Rayners Lane who advised me to contact a divorce Lawyer in

Uxbridge. I made an appointment straight away... for later on that week. When I got there, I explained the situation. He advised that I should keep a note of all conversations and actions and should seek a divorce on the grounds of unreasonable behaviour. He emphasised, 'I should do nothing contentious'.

At the second interview, he advised, 'not to seek custody, this was rarely granted to the father...' He seemed surprised that I should try... why, he wondered, would anyone want six children. However, if that were what I wanted he would support me believing that attempting a reconciliation rarely worked out, that when relationship had reached this point a separation was the only solution. I accepted the situation and gave him his instructions: I would seek a divorce on grounds of unreasonable behaviour, and custody of the youngest children.

When I returned to work I explained how I was placed and I was fortunate enough to have a very kind and sympathetic Head of Department who said that it was up to me to tell him what hours I could do and what days I needed off and how my teaching programme could be perhaps altered to suit.

I gave up continuing with my studies at Garnet College - dropping out of the degree course, and all the technical studies I was engaged upon. All my charity works I stopped except the Harrow Lyons whose annual charity concert at Kodak I was organizing. My energies were now going to be fully concentrated on making life at home more bearable for the children and preparing for the divorce and aftermath. There was to be no going back...!

I wrote and told my godmother Vera all that had been going on and how I was going to manoeuvre Sally into a position so that I would stay at Norwood Drive and keep custody. Unfortunately Sally opened the letter and read my plan thereby knowing in advance what I intended.

Sally and I had arranged to spend a holiday in Benidorm with our neighbour's the Wrights' that Easter. Now that our relationship had reached such a difficult stage instead of Sally Rebecca accompanied me instead. It was fun, being the sort of break that comes just in time – frees all the mental stress from the family break-up.

A week after returning from holiday a Family Welfare Officer allotted the case. Both Sally and I had interviews. During mine, I explained I was applying for custody, outlining how I had changed my working pattern to fit in with a more school based home life – to be home when the children came home from school.. I gave instances how Sally was going out every night only returning well after eleven. Whilst all this was going on, I was resolved to make it clear to the authorities that I had been a good father, for I knew it could be proved - that there were enough people who would vouch for my good character and previous efforts.

Over those first few months, I made many reports to the Social Worker and had at least four interviews. I kept her informed of what was happening who to contact to find out the reality of the situation and where she could get confirmation. I copied in my Solicitor after having various meetings with him. He did remark why I was seeking custody when it was so obvious that life was intolerable; he could not understand why I was bothering, considering the improbability of success. I said that I could not live with myself unless I tried every means to secure my children future, and bring order about.

On my final interview with the Social Worker, I pointed out that I had a very short working week; that I had school holidays off; I was doing the cooking - at least fifty-percent, the cleaning and house maintenance, and that I had the complete support of my mother-in-law, friends and family. She said, 'none

of these social and fatherly skills would convince her that I should have custody, and that even if Sally were, for instance, a prostitute, the Registrar, would still grant her custody'. Even with such biased opinions, I still carried on hoping that the Registrar at the Court would see the true situation.

All this time I was in communication with Rita who was a kind friend and supporter. Her house was somewhere where I could go at any time of day or night, food would be provided, a drop of Sherry and a ginger biscuit, a warm fire and peace and quite. Delightful conversation and everything a harassed person might need was the order of the day. My mother-in-law was a lifesaver and confidant. None could have had a better friend or a person who knew the situation as well as she did and who understood the mentality of her daughter. She offered me a place in her house to stay – that I could make it my home and in that way I could be near to the children and it would help her out with the maintenance of the house and garden. I said how grateful I was for the suggestion – “that I would think the offer over, but considered that something more permanent should be what I ought to look for.”

Life continued throughout that Easter term. It was very difficult to concentrate on lectures for many times I found myself listening to what I was saying which is the very worst position to be in as it is most distracting. I was fortunate that I had been made up to Lecturer Grade II sometime before Sally's news destroyed the family's equilibrium...

At the end of each term, lecturers sometimes made up a visit to a work place for the students to see how industry works – so that they might have a better understanding of technical advances and the latest equipment. During one of these visits, I got talking to some of the workers I had known before I went into teaching. They told me they were setting up a small factory

and wanted a retoucher to do some of the corrections and would I be interested... At this, I jumped at the chance because it was a good way to find out all the latest methods and to keep one's hand in.

I set up a work place in the garage at home using some of the chemicals from college to start me off. I picked up the positives and a marked up proof sheet and from there started my own business keeping on with teaching to provide continuity.

Play Boy magazine made up the bulk of the work. It was funny to see all these films hanging up on lines, stretched in the garage, to dry, but it did provide cash, which would eventually prove to be essential.

In May 1981, there must have been a disagreement between Sally and her friend because she became most unhappy... It transpired; he had given her an ultimatum - their future was to be with him or with the children, not both. I took my chance to take her out for a meal at the local carvery. During the course of the meal, I asked her, "How the relationship was, and should I call off the divorce, and make an effort to pick up the pieces?" She remarked, "she still loved him, and would not give him up – would continue seeing him."

With those words, I walked out and from that time on, we slept apart, in separate rooms; the course of events that transpired from that time onwards dictated that there would be a separation that would lead to a divorce, and that my life would take a separate course away. I still believed firmly that I had a very good chance of securing custody.

A few weeks later, the Social Worker came round to interview Ruth and Benjamin... to ask, "Whom they wished to have custody by – their mother or father?" Rebecca was not asked - because she was deemed too young to have considered preferences. Benjamin, who was fourteen a month later declared,

“I will stay with my mother, who needs my support.” He turned to me saying, “It isn’t that I love you less it’s because I know you will be able to look after yourself.”

Ruth, who was sixteen in September - in her final year at school. The Family Welfare Officer said, “Because Ruth is almost sixteen, she is the only child whose opinion would be considered by the court - as being a principal witness - capable of directing a course of action.”

Ruth resisted making a choice. She didn’t chose, saying, “I do not want the responsibility?” It was not only an invidious position to put any young person into but also expedient, taking the responsibility away from the authorities putting the responsibility onto the shoulders of a sixteen year old. It was a moment that was to have far reaching effects, upsetting the lives of all those who lived at sixty-eight not just for the moment but forever. It was a monumental blunder.

Turning to Sally the Social Worker asked, “Will you stay at home in the evening now? Sally said, “No, I only stay out because my husband is at home.” Those words concluded the final interview...

At the last visit to my Solicitor, I told him of the support that I had been offered by friends, neighbours, and relatives - to speak up, and tell the court the facts. That did not change his mind. These witnesses would not be called to give a character reference or to explain the children’s living conditions. He went on to say, “the only person who would be listened to would be my mother-in-law, and, would I ask her if she would give her opinion to the court?”

That week I saw Rita and talked it over with her, telling her that I needed her to be in court or else my appeal for custody would have no chance what ever to succeed. She said she that if she told the court Sally would never speak to her again.” That

was the second person to step back from telling the truth – that sealed my fate!

With that, statement by Rita hopes were dashed, my spirits dropped to its lowest level knowing that I had lost any hope for custody. There was no way that I could prove my point that I was the fittest to bring-up the children - which I would be in the home always to see to their care and safety.

The court hearing, held in Uxbridge, where I had to present my case for custody. Sally, called to the witness box, gave her side of the story, repeating what she had told the social worker. After her explanation, her friend too had to give his understandings of the situation and to say what his plans were. He declared to the Registrar that he had no intension of getting married to Sally and that he certainly did not want the children, whatever was decided. The Court on the strength of the Social Workers judgement gave custody to Sally. With that, I knew I would have to leave Norwood Drive and all that I had built up over the twenty-five years of work – the family, processions, and all the happy memories, planning the way ahead for each child and seeing to all their needs. This was now at an end.

During all this time, I had been taking Ruth to her riding lessons. On one of these trips through Pinner Green, I happened to notice an estate agent's board up outside a small semi-detached cottage in Pinner Green – Leighton Cottages. It was in a row of a mid Victorian two up two down semi-detached cottages with slated roofs, red sandstone brick walls, rebated white painted windows with cast iron gutters.

Leighton Cottages

Built prominently, at the crossroads Pinner Green stands The Starling public house. This well frequented watering hole is popular with Saturday nighters and weekend cyclists - who populate the tables and chairs placed behind the low wall - giving boundary to the pub's frontage. Lined up along the road opposite a row of early Victorian semi-detached cottages adds country charm to the pub's friendly exterior... Fortunately, these have been kept true to their architectural period: displaying neither plastic covered, picture windows, or painted brickwork.

Number 5, Leighton Cottages is vacant - having been placed on the market by a local estate agent acting for the property's owner. It had laid empty for a number of weeks and the agent was eager to sell...

A white painted wicket gate accesses this neat little house, beyond which a brick path leads to an enclosed porch. Inside, a wood panelled front door is open to reveal an empty room... The agent's details describe a small comfortable parlour... its open fire, and iron grate, set in a tiled surround below a wooden mantle-shelf. The moulded picture rail and ornate skirting compliments detailed architraves - around the doors. Either side of the chimneybreast a shelf, with the lower half draped by small hung curtain hides a narrower shelf below. All these details were the original fixtures and fittings and quite charming. Opposite, another white painted panelled door, opens into a dining room - also provided with its an original black, cast iron, polished grate - shone by frequent polishing. A tightly curved, staircase takes you up to the two bedrooms, entranced by a step-up from a small landing. Downstairs a further door off the dining room leads to a narrow lean-to kitchen with its working surface, butler sink, and

draining board lit by windows that look out onto a side passage. At its further end a door reveals a white painted bathroom.

An old ledge and braced door leads out into the garden with brick path, coal shed and garden store - behind which a row of strung raspberry canes. An old cast iron, wooden rolled, mangle gave an eye-catching focus point to the end of the garden. In years past the enclosed area had been planted to form a kitchen garden on both sides of the brick path... it was perfect and represented for me a longed for haven. My task now was to set the wheels in motion to buy it.

Both neighbours were old and very welcoming, inviting me in - on my first visit, for a cup of tea. My immediate neighbour was an elderly woman who told me much history of the area and on the other side an equally old man who offered to place all my bets for me. Eventually I came to know them well and they made the whole place more intimate, appealing, and home like.

I contacted the Agent and found out that it was on the market for fifty six thousand pounds. I immediately offered the asking price, which was naturally accepted. Now I had to secure a mortgage and arrange a deposit of £500.

I had a long talk, with Rita, who agreed, that living there would make it simple for the children to keep in touch - being within walking distance of Norwood Drive, and if necessary enable some to live there. A number 183 bus stops outside The Starling Public House opposite. A route, which ran from Harrow, through North Harrow and Pinner Green, to Northwood. This was a further advantage. Now I felt I was really making a constructive move to counter the negative effects of the breakdown - in preserving the family unit.

Sally's mother advised not letting it be known what I was intending doing because it would lead to an almost impossible situation at home - pressure from Sally, even though she

appreciated that it was the only way to ensure a stabilizing position at Norwood Drive. Therefore, I just had to be patient and let the purchase continue under its own steam. I got out my paints, painted a picture of the cottage, and imagined my future in my very own home and the peace that it would afford me.

I approached National Westminster Bank for a mortgage, who promised that they would lend the money but only after seeing my separation papers. Rita offered to lend me the five hundred pound deposit. My quest was almost over. All I had to do now was to buy the house and move in... How naive I was. A few weeks later just before I was to buy the bank called-in the loan and refused to sanction any payment. The Bank believed that I did not have sufficient capital or salary to warrant such a loan – my security was suspect.

I immediately contacted a friend, Keith who ran an Insurance business – he was also going through his own rather messy divorce settlement, he arranged a mortgage through one of his lenders, Guardian Assurance. I did not fully understand what I was letting myself into because, panicked by the bank and their attitude, I did not fully understand what future hardship this would bring - the crippling mortgage rate. It transpired that the Guardian wanted seventeen and a half percent interest. With that kind of repayment and the maintenance bill, I was volunteering to pay; things were going to be very tight. Still it was a done deal - within a few days I would be the new owner.

I just had to extract myself from Norwood Drive without any theatricals and upsets. Rita suggested that it should be done without fuss and so that is what I tried to do. One afternoon in July, I loaded up the car and left my past behind me. I was very sad to be going especially my not being able to explain to the children why or to say good-bye. I wondered then, 'did I expect any word of support since the disclosure, and if I had will that

have been an act of criticism or censure to their mother? I was never to know...!’

That evening, before I left forever - in June 1981, I had a long talk with Sally, to find out if she was still resolved to carry on seeing her friend. I explained what I thought would happen, if the divorce was made Absolute – which I believed would occur in eight months. It was not that I was clairvoyant or trying to be smart but it was obvious to me that it would all end in a great deal of unhappiness, especially for us. Although I said this, and believed the divorce would cause problems, I was resolved to improve my circumstances - to do everything in my power to lead a better life – be happier.

I could see quite clearly that in the event of some if not all the children marrying their offspring would be without the steadying influence of grandparents, and extended family. There would be no joint decision making for their education and no discipline to see to it that they would continue their piano practice and homework.

I also outlined what would be the result to our relationship with our friends– that we would not be able to see them together and if apart would make for divided loyalties and possible friction. She did not believe me, saying, ‘she would be able to cope...’

As to my final words, I said that I loved her and always would; that what had come about was very sad considering all that we had achieved and endured. With those words, we went to bed. The next day I would be moving out to start a new life and hopefully the children would visit me - and perhaps... move in?

CHAPTER II

Pinner Green – Two up two down – Maintenance and Decoration – New Studio – Gardening – Finding furniture – Making a home – Coal fire – Love finds a way – Social services error – Lions – Badminton – New extension – Re-mortgage – Pay back Rita.

The next day, when everyone was out - at work or at school, I started loading up the car, taking great care that none of the neighbours were watching – piling the excess, including the mattress, onto the car's roof and tying it down. Fortunately, Leighton Cottages was only three miles down the road. With a racing pulse-rate, set in motion by a heady mixture of being excited sad and worried, first one and then all together, I set off. Making my way to my new home... I felt very exposed, slightly nervous and highly embarrassed, in case I met someone I knew.

I drew-up outside and started to unload... Fighting my way into the house... hauled the heavy double mattress through the living room up the winding narrow staircase into the bedroom. I was stuck halfway up the stairs unable to go in either direction. It was so heavy and unyielding. At last I crawled out from underneath and dragged it up the remaining stairs... one-step at a time, planting it with relief onto the floor. It was a well that the divan section folded in half, allowing me to cut them apart... I never did sew them together again. Attacking the problem of the stairs in the same manner - hauled each part-up-each-step, one at a time. By the time I had emptied the car and put everything away, I was completely done in. I was shaking like a leaf not just

with the energy used but recognising the decisive moment... I was on my own for the first time in my life!

I looked about me, at what I had done, gathering all my little pieces around me to make a new life. These processions were the sum of my life – nearly twenty-five years of struggle, travelling up to London, working the maximum amount of overtime, one of the highest paid workers and managers in the printing industry. Not a very auspicious result!

I did not tell anyone, on the advice of Rita, who knew all my plans – that I was making a new home for all those who wanted to come and live with me. She said, ‘it would only make parting difficult if you try to explain it all.’ Continuing, said, ‘within a couple of weeks, when you are settled in, I will let everyone know.’

Giving me a chance to get the place ship shape to receive my first visitor I worked hard all that summer holiday - particularly on the outside, to make the structure weatherproof and secure for the coming winter. I was up on the roof replacing slates, repairing gutters and down pipes, repointing brickwork, and finally, ended up painting the house.

Inside I redecorated, replaced the curtains, hung pictures, and rewired some electric points in the kitchen. Those fine sunny days went all too quickly. For the first time for many years, I was very engrossed in achieving all my goals to make this the very snuggest, securest home ever. The garden had to be tidied and I had to convert the coal and tool shed into a retouching studio. All this time I had to continue to work part-time to bring in the extra cash.

What goaded me to work even harder was the goal to make the place so attractive and homely that the youngest children would be drawn to its comfort and security.

Paicie, Rita's sister, bought me a radio and tape player, which I still have and treasure. My first set of four tapes I still remember for they kept me sane in periods of stress. One was of piano solos of all the well known classical composers; another of Sidney Thompson's Old Time Melodies which reminded me of life at home with my parents; a third which was a current pop tune by Shackatack, called I believe Trucking and my final tape was of Manhattan Transfer. Rita provided some linen; Stan bought me down some towels and spare utensils, the Lyons Club, through the welfare department at Rayners Lane, provided second hand furniture; I was all set on a new life...!The coalhouse produced enough coal for all the first summer and following winter. On cold evenings I lit the fire, played my tapes and listened to my radio; enjoying my cup of coffee with a cigarette sitting on my two seater settee in front of the fire which crackled in the grate.

Rita was my first guest; she bought a friend round by car, and all together, we looked at every room; every new procession, and every item of furniture..., lovingly polished and carefully arranged. My little house had to be tidied and swept, dusted and washed, to show it off to its best advantage. Raspberries out of the garden with cream, and sponge cake on the cake stand - made for the occasion. They were highly impressed... the smell of coffee percolated the rooms and the fire crackled in the hearth.

Rebecca came round with loads of homework, which she did, sitting at the dining room table; speaking with her friends on the telephone to find out what they were doing and constructing her homework as she went along. She was my most frequent visitor – her voice gave the house a familiar ring, gave me company, and made the transition so much easier. Occasionally she stayed overnight at the weekends. It was a treat for me to have her there for breakfast and to fuss around her.

My freelance work was continuing well. The tool shed was now converted into a studio and all the chemicals and dishes were in place. Lines for drying films strung across the walls and a blower-heater speedily got them dry.

That year I replaced my Ford Cortina Estate for a later saloon model bought from Pauline, Stan's wife, which had been a used car from Stan's work place.

It was about this time that Rita asked for her money back – the five hundred pounds she had loaned me to by Leighton Cottage. At that time, I was paying a voluntary divorce settlement of over £174 per month, which was enormous – which I was continually falling in arrears with. Frankly something had to give although the freelance work I was doing made all the difference – just about enabled me to make some sort of payment, to not only Sally but her mother too.

That September 1981, just before I started back to college after the summer break, the Social Welfare Officer phoned to ask if she could come round to see how I was getting on. I was pleased to make a date, which she kept the following week. I had my little house ship shape and Bristol fashion - fire lit and coffee on. We settled down after showing her proudly round, pointing out all that I had achieved that summer.

We discussed the whole situation - how things were shaping out, who had visited. All that had happened and who had visited me since I had left my previous home three months before. She said that, "she was pleased that it had all worked out fine and that she could see I was coping well. However, she, and the Harrow Social services, would like me to return to 68 and to take up where I had left off." I asked her, "what was different now, why were they asking this?" She went on to say, "events had proved you right, that they had been wrong - deceived - believing Mrs Kearey when she had said, 'I only leave the home to get away

from my husband.’ Mrs Kearey was leaving the young children alone in the evenings and at night – that the older children left in charge were not responsible and that they, the Social Services, were concerned at the breakdown of discipline and care in the home.”

At last, I thought, the Social Services had come to their senses. I had told them all along that they should have looked into the situation more thoroughly. She, the Welfare Officer, had NOT believed what I had been saying and had caused the problem in the first place. It was however perfectly true that I should have seen them after the third child had been born – when Sally had wanted to increase still further the size of the family. That had been irresponsible, weak, and thoughtless on my behalf – taking the easy ways out by letting Sally eventually get her own way. Nevertheless, that was now all water under the bridge]. Here I was faced, I thought, by a situation, which would get me back in charge, so that I could bring order out of chaos and get the whole show back onto the correct course – keep the younger children in the home doing their homework and not away, where temptations could easily lead them astray.

I told the Welfare Officer that, ‘I would be perfectly happy to sell up and go back to 68 Norwood Drive but if I did, would they in turn, give me their support?’ She asked me, ‘what sort of support would I need’. I told her that, ‘I would not want Mrs Kearey in the house - that would only lead to disruption’. The Welfare Officer replied, “I have no authority to ask Mrs Kearey to leave, you will have to go back under the previous arrangement or not at all.” My reply to that was, “You made the mistake, and you put the matter right.”

This was a most disappointing and discouraging answer. I told her that, “What she was saying was unreasonable: I had been right in my assessment of the situation; I had had to leave

my home and buy another house, furniture and utensils; this meant leaving all that I had built up for the children who needed my support. What she was asking me to do was to go back but not to have any authority?"

I continued, by asking her to look around, see how I was placed – how I liked to live, in what circumstance and in what condition. What I needed was good will by all parties to ensure maximum co-operation. I went on to say, "Because, what they were asking was unworkable, I would have to say 'NO' to her request." With that, she left never to be in touch again understanding that there was no other course of action left for any of us.

Sally controlled the situation: would never give up the house, move, change her mind, or let go of the young children. All these things were unthinkable; she was incapable of letting go of anything, raked by possessiveness and insecurity.

Gradually things worked out. I got used to walking to Pinner station to get the train to the Elephant & Castle where I taught most days. The return home was wonderful going to my own home making up the fire with all my own things around me. The freelance work had to be finished ready for the next edition and perhaps Rebecca would be round.

That Christmas 1981 was my first alone I do not remember anyone coming round or receiving any invitations except by the neighbours. I was very glad I had my own home: the fire lit up the room with its dancing flames, my new second hand black and white television set, received from the Harrow Lions Club, was my latest addition and my world was thus a considerable improvement on the previous Christmas. I hung paper decorations, put up fairy lights and set up a tree. My home was all very cheering and snug. My dear neighbours were ever on hand

with a welcoming cup of tea and friendly word. This contributed towards my new feeling of belonging.

Further, up the road a young couple invited me in for a Christmas drink. He was a builder and ran his own company in league with his father. They were building an extension to his house, which was similar to my own. Naturally, he wondered if I too would be interested in building on – installing a new kitchen, upstairs bathroom, and further bedroom. I looked over his plans and could see the potential. I agreed that there ideas and suggestions were reasonable and would fit in. I told then I had no money and how I was placed with my mortgage. They were astounded by the amount I was paying and the rate of interest. The wife immediately went round to another neighbour who was invited in. He worked at the Head Office of Abbey National Building Society in London. He was shown my figures and personal details upon which he declared that he could arrange not only another mortgage for the original sum but an additional amount for the proposed extension. If I succeeded in eighty pounds, a month would reduce obtaining this new mortgage my outgoings. What fantastic news but how annoyed I was that I had been paying over the odds for something when it was not necessary - all because I had relied upon a so-called friend.

Eventually the plans were drawn up, permission was granted and a date set for when the building-work was to start. It was all very exciting and gave me an enormous fillip.

The Conservative Government sought a drastic reduction of coal. Pits closed and production reduced. The miners went on strike, which resulted in hardship, poverty, violence, and frustration. Thatcher demanded the industry to be self supporting – a rational if difficult and unkind goal. The unrest continued well into the 80s. The period was termed ‘the age of discontent!’

Sexual behaviour for women gradually underwent almost total liberation. Virginity declined. It was recorded that almost fifty percent of fewer than sixteen has admitted to an affair; that twenty-six per cent of fewer than twenty-ones claimed their first sexual experience before the age of sixteen. Thirty years before these figures would have been just over five percent.

The Social Democratic Party formed in 81 and the following year the Falklands war began. Prince Charles married Diana and inflation fell steadily; unemployment reached over three million two million of those jobs were lost entirely – mostly by men from manufacturing.

CHAPTER III

Happy outcome - New family – Tinkers Hey – Appreciation of colour – Designing a new Course - Training for Industry – Moving in - Financial Services – Hill Samuel – Wedding – Holiday Home in Altea - Charmandean School - Aldenham – Selling the Cottage – Sadness.

At college I picked up a magazine called ‘Homes & Gardens’ which advertised, as part of its content, a friends and partnership club for professional people. I cut it out and carried this advertisement around in my pocket for a couple of weeks. Turning out my pockets one day I discovered it and finally after much thought decided to join the agency. I filled in their application form and waited for the result. I received my first three names and telephone numbers. I meet all three but found they were all tense and uncommunicative - displaying great disappointment with the way their own lives had worked out and not wanting to commit themselves to another relationship. They

were certainly not the sort of individuals I had in mind to either to develop a lasting friendship with or to share an evening. Another three names were sent to me and after picking out one decided to write her a letter setting out all my hopes and fears – what I was looking for and how I wanted my future to work out, the sort of life I had led and wanted to get away from. How I had ended up feeling let down and nervous about starting a new relationship. I believed that life would be enhanced by sharing each experience, which came along.

I sent the letter not expecting any reply or telephone call. Within that first week, I had a phone call from someone called Josephine who lived in Tring, Hertfordshire. She said, “She would like to meet up and could I suggest a venue.” Just opposite me was a restaurant which always seemed to be an inviting place so I answered that I could, giving her a time, date and place.

Josephine called and we walk over the road to the restaurant and the previously booked table. I had never been to that restaurant before; in fact, I was never used to eating out at all. Josephine was forty-three but looked ten years younger I was forty-seven and felt much older. Here was a sparkling, eight stone, five foot three, bubbly haired, smiling extrovert; smartly dressed in a fawn coloured trouser suite, who had been driving a pale green Toyota Bluebird with élan, her parking was immaculate – this description referred to everything she did.

The evening was a total success. Time stood still, as the story goes, and we got on famously. This sounds like some Hollywood film story line but that was how it was. That was not because my life was so grotty that practically anything would bring sunshine to it or that the fog of depression had dulled down the scenery and life around me was making this moment appear in full Technicolor with an orchestra backing the dialogue. Whatever, as you may well imagine, life suddenly took on a rosy

hue and the Walt Disney songbirds flew around chasing each other. My letter had born fruit because what I had written described exactly what Josephine felt - was looking for.

Josephine Mitman, nee Easom, was born in Hilton, St. Ives in Huntingdon on the 27th February 1939, to Harry and Eva Easom nee Martin. Educated at Nottingham High School for Girls and Nottingham University; she was determined to make her mark. Her father was a lecturer in engineering, a committed Salvation Army Captain and tireless Town Councillor. Her mother was also deeply involved with the army and local 'good-works' and brother, Paul, has a chemistry doctorate and worked as department head with Boots the Chemists.

Josephine was going through her final divorce settlements being married in 1962 and divorced in November 1980 – the reasons were very similar to my own except that she was looking after her four children who were all at boarding schools. The two girls, Helen, thirteen, was almost the same age as Rebecca just a couple of days older. Anna, Josephine's youngest daughter, was nine. Both girls attended Charmandean School, a fee paying boarding school for girls, later to be changed in the final year to co-educational, established near to Buckingham town. The boys had both attended The Dragon School, Oxford, their father's old school, and offered and accepted a music scholarship at Aldenham School, Hertfordshire. Anthony, the eldest, was a piano and oboe scholar, in his last year at school finishing off his 'A' levels, almost exactly eighteen being born on the 24th. January 1964, Christopher, the pianist and trombone player, was sixteen, seven days later on the 31st.

So began a relationship that was what we were both looking for. The letter sent to Josephine, written before we had met, set out what I was trying to find in a partnership. This had obviously struck a cord with her – we both knew what we

wanted; we had enough experience to be sure and we knew how difficult our goals were to achieve.

We met regularly those first few months. I met the girls that Easter break and found them charming. Whereas the boys had been to the Dragon School, the girls had been to Arts Educational in Tring.

After a couple of months it became clear to us both that, we were suited and enjoyed similar goals and expectations from life. I gave her a key to the cottage and by that gesture I hoped would show that I considered we could make our friendship permanent. Later we often met at the railway station in London and journeyed back together. Therefore, I suppose that those train journeys were our courting get-togethers.

Josephine home was a detached chalet bungalow called Tinkers Hey that was perched at the top of Tring Hill close to Tring in Hertfordshire. There I met the girls, Helen and Anna, who on a regular basis had long weekends away from boarding school. They were fresh, keen and charming, naturally welcoming and unaffected. I slipped into their routine as naturally as if I had known them for years instead of days. I did for them exactly what I had done for my own children and was adaptable enough to quickly become conversant with their mode of living, habits and special requirements. Josephine introduced me to her home help Florence and her daughter Iris. They were always so kind to me, providing me with a cup of tea and a slice of cake whenever I went to their house. They were a wonderful couple of characters who I immediately got on with and grew to love.

Josephine was working for Hill Samuel Insurance Company as an Investment Adviser – part of the Hill Samuel Merchant Banking Group - she had been with them for about a year and based at St James', London. By chance, she had been introduced to them and had immediately clicked with the existing team, their

working arrangements, and the need for such items by the public. It is not often that individuals starting in a new career find that they are very suited but for Josephine she had found the job fulfilling, enjoyable and challenging to the extent that she became within a very short period one of the key workers with the group. She was a round peg in a round hole. She is naturally interested in finance - how it can be managed and made to work - what it can provide and how it can be protected. Having run her own company, promoted its wares, engaged its staff and travelled extensively probably knew more than the average financial adviser.

I soon took Josephine to Rita's to show her off. They got on famously and chatted away as if they had known each other for years. Rita was impressed and said so. I still went round to have lunch on my half days. Rita was fully conversant with that was going on. I used to pick Rebecca from North London and take her back with me to her grandmothers. It was the only place we could meet which provided a warm comfortable environment. It worked out very well.

With my holidays and working arrangements, I was on hand to look after the home whilst Josephine was out. Being an Adviser meant that she worked unsocial hours; having to know each of the products well; able to use a considerable amount of personal initiative whilst being self-motivated. I took off her shoulders all the problems of the home not just the cooking and cleaning but also the maintenance of the property and grounds. This allowed her to concentrate on the job in hand without having to worry about what was going on at home.

The construction work started on Leighton Cottage that summer 1982 with an increased mortgage from another lender – Abbey National with an interest rate at six and a half percent.

What an enormous difference it made to me, I could pay Sally's maintenance whilst having a new loan to cover the extension.

At this time, the number of marriages braking-down was half of all the total of those marriages taking place. Splitting up meant a lowering of life styles of all concerned – probably one of the worst aspects I found after working so hard to build it up; with children receiving little or no pocket money - my children experienced this and found it very difficult to manage making them feel underprivileged in front of their peers.

Society, at that time, recognised there was a general lowering of moral behaviour - extra marital relations were freely talked about, dating agencies were used as pick-up points for sex and pre-marital relationships were accepted... As a father of girls, this behaviour worried me enormously.

Homosexual relationships were included in TV plays and revues which was for my eyes was taboo coming from the sort of Victorian home and environment I had grown up in.

There was a rise too in the taking of drugs as well as solvents and an increase in sexual crimes. It described 'the upset society' because all these disruptive, anti-social habits came close together, rising up over a twenty-year period. These social changes, together with high unemployment and union unrest, stimulated a feeling of hostility towards management and business institutions. This ultimately led to The Tebbit Act in 1982, which restricted aggressive union behaviour – bullying, when taking industrial action – making unions legally liable for infringements in their agreements with managements. What played into the Tory's hands was the monumental increase in unemployment. Between 1981 and 83 there was a one and a half million reduction in trades union membership. It was to get worse! By a system of 'monetary policy', inflation, in the same period, fell from 18 percent to 4.5.

The Court granted a Decree Absolute, in 1982, and with it I received the Courts decision for a 'clean break,' - an agreement that satisfied both Sally and me. The settlement stated that Sally would be awarded the property and contents but only until the youngest child reached school leaving age – full-time education, or earlier by agreement. I was to receive twenty percent of the value of the property, by valuation at the time payment made. I was also to contribute towards Rebecca's educational fees. This was to end when the Insurance Company started their payments to cover school fees... and when Sally received top-up financial help from the school's welfare fund in 1981. The property mortgage was my responsibility held by Provident Life not to end until later in 1982. Because Sally was in full-time employment with the Local Health Authority, on a rate paid for a senior medical secretary, I would not have to pay towards maintenance.

Josephine and I came to the simple conclusion that it would be sensible for me to spend more time at her home to see if we were suited – as compatible as we imagined we were. The girls applauded the decision and so that is what happened. I became integrated into their world, visiting their school, talking to their teachers and generally doing all the things a father would do. They enjoyed the more even tenor to their lives having a man about the house doing all the odd jobs and the gardening whilst enjoying a far happier mother. Meanwhile I shuttled backwards and forwards to work using Tring station often meeting up with Josephine. It did not seem to make a great deal of difference in journey time - they were about the same. It was just nice to be going back to company and to be wanted. We went as a foursome camping up to Ripon and Durham and we got on extremely well, the girls finding that the pleasures on a campsite can be a challenge especially using the wash-house and toilets!

That Christmas I helped collect the girls from school – sorting out their trunks and this time the boys came home too. I fitted in as best I could with all the arrangements, including the children visiting their father. Therefore, this was to be my new routine. It seemed perfectly settled and enjoyable and what was important I felt wanted making my past life back at Leighton Cottage, rediscovered on those few occasions I went back there to see how the building was getting on, lonely, uninteresting, and very quiet. I knew now what I had been missing. How much better it was to have said to you, "I love you," and mean it!

I saw Rebecca on a monthly basis at Rita's house. This eventual seventy mile round trip had to be undergone to coincide with her leaving school. I would wait outside to see her coming out with her friends; that I would load into my car to drop them off on the way. We ended up at Rita's house to spend over an hour together after which I took her home. It was the only arrangement possible although very unsatisfactory. These visits ended when Rita said that she could not bear them any longer because she could not stand the disruption. I think really it was because she was being sidelined -wanted all my attention.

Unfortunately, I never received an invitation to view Rebecca's work at North London or to attend any of the school open days, meet the teacher events or sports days. Her mother naturally tended to be first with the invitations and coming events diary, which was understandable but annoying. I saw Benjamin a few times coming out of the amusement arcade in Rayners Lane but that was all he never came to Leighton Cottage no doubt preferring the cinema or arcade. It was enormously difficult to see any of them at all; meeting on street corners or in the park was not realistic. Whilst I had been at Pinner, only Rebecca had been a regular visitor on a weekly basis – for much of the time the only visitor.

The whole object of buying a house in walking distance of Norwood Drive was wasted – it was also not really a satisfactory situation because I knew every street corner; every twist and turn of every road. Each area had a memory and of course, there was always the chance of bumping into Sally or her friend. Fortunately that was now all outdated I had a future with Josephine and that is how we saw it - Rebecca got on well with her and could always stay at Tinkers Hey if ever she felt the need. It was a very happy period – one of hope and very forward looking.

My brother Stan began to suffer from a weakening of the muscles in his legs and had many examinations to try to find out what was the cause. This had been an on-going condition for almost a year – he had put it down to stress and lack of exercise, but it turned out to be a muscle wasting disease called Muscular Dystrophy. From that moment, in 1982, his life changed - it was now one of planning for his long-term medical care and this was made more critical because Pauline was pregnant.

What a thoroughly awful thing to happen to Stan now that he was gradually getting his life together. It is never a good time for something like this to strike one down but in this instance, it was dreadful. Their son Tim was born in 1983 and almost from that time Stan could see that his life and his family's was going to change. Stan managed to keep-on in the motor industry for a further three years all the time becoming weaker. This became more trying because the truck and bus industry was in the doldrums forcing employers to lay off staff, which is the way he ended his career.

In 1983 there were nearly three and a half million unemployed and the future was not so predictable nor settled – it was believed that computers would completely take over all aspects of life - planning, hand skills and labour intensive

manufacturing leaving just the service industry. Like all predictions, this did not come about quickly but lasted another twenty years.

The printing industry, led by the newspaper industry, was deteriorating in both profitability and print quality. Firms were folding up almost weekly. Information Technology in the shape of computerised print production including colour reproduction was being produced using all new electronic equipment. The hold previously maintained by the strong unions undermined by the changing technology coupled with increasing high unemployment. Firms abroad won orders for printing contracts. Production methods and labour produced cheaper, faster print runs at a higher standard. This created a disorientated, disillusioned workforce, which lost its union strength. Workers became adaptable, which is exactly what the managements wanted.

Within Further Education Colleges, and in particular the Pre-Printing Processes based at The London College of Printing, there was great disquiet. Gravure suffered most for there was very little of the department left; Letterpress relied upon flexography to support its staff; Lithography although on the rise as a process gave way to rotary scanners for its reproduction technology and Screen Process continued to expand having more packaging and front of store advertising to deal with. There was talk about new forms of image production including ink jet and photocopies, which were all, encompasses in the new reprographic technology.

In the newspaper industry the development of an interaction between telecommunication equipment, computing - the storage of information, office/desk top equipment and picture manipulation; growth in the application of optical fibre systems in rotary scanners which pass modulated beams of

coloured and white light to make the separation printers. These all contributed towards the new printing and image technology, which would revolutionize newspaper production.

Further Education – the Industrial Training Boards took up Training for Industry. The government acknowledged it by instigating a new concept called industrial training boards. Industry recognised that vocational training was at an all time low in terms of both quality and worthwhileness. The Industrial Training Boards were set up to try to make sure reasonable standards of up-to-date information and relevant skills were both taught in the workplace and further education colleges. All these things had to be able to be tested assessed and marks given. Every trainee or apprentice had to have their standards entered into a training manual, signed by the students, the student's firm and college. Finally, the Board Inspector checked these reports.

On a bright, sunny morning that 10th of May 1983, Josephine and I got married at Aylesbury Registry Office. I had Duncan Kirby as my best man and Josephine had his wife Gelia as consort. We were very happy to be there and to share what was to be a very joyful union. Before getting married, we had discussed between our Solicitor and ourselves the consequences of altering our name so that both sets of children would not feel excluded. We therefore had all the paperwork ready to get married using the name Mitman-Kearey. Josephine's boys never used this facility but the girls did when they felt able or felt using the name gave them security.

The agreement to get married and to hold the ceremony unknown to everyone else was exciting, intimate and wholly in keeping with what we felt at the time. We never thought that this to be a selfish, unthoughtful or disquieting act, but wanting, perhaps even needing, something to call our own, after losing such a great deal. We thought that we were doing right by those

relying upon us, namely Helen and Anna. Had any of my children decided to stay with me then they too would have been included in our thinking.

When we got back to our home, Tinkers Hey, I carried Josephine over the threshold and we celebrated with our friends cutting the cake and toasting the occasion with champagne.

Our marriage prompted us to give much thought as to how the girls were going to be educated - whether Charmandean was fitting or not. They wanted to become daygirls and live at home. Anthony was finishing his 'A' levels and Christopher had another year to do at Aldenham.

The paper manufacturing Industry was suffering from competition from Scandinavia and Canada, which was undermining UKs production - Simon, would have to seek work abroad to get the most out of his qualification. Because of this and other reasons, relating to future prospects Simon changed direction and became an Accountant after graduating. His first job was with Knox Cropper, Accountants based at Blackfriars, London. I often met up with him at Blackfriars when walking between the Elephant and Castle to Back Hill, Farringdon, where the college had an annex.

Josephine and I had both driven up to Manchester to witness Simon's graduation. It was something of a challenge to get him kitted out in his mortarboard and gown for the official photograph. Eventually Simon trailed us back south in his trusty mini.

After our wedding in May, home life for me was at Tinkers Hey. Leighton Cottage was still in the hands of the builders - although almost finished, I went back there at frequent intervals to see how they were getting on. When the extension had been built, I placed the property on the market. Thankfully, it was soon sold, covering all my expenses with a few thousand pounds to

spare. All the furniture so lovingly and carefully gathered together was sold or given back to charity. The two clocks used as part exchange for a lovely Vienna clock and the surplus goods given to Florence and Iris.

I was very sorry to see not only my little cottage being sold but also all those things I had collected, to make it so comfortable and snug, got rid of. Leighton Cottage had been for me a fine bolthole from a not very nice world. Still, there was excitement in the air and a new beginning to contemplate.

That Easter as a family we went to East Anglia to spend a week at the Trust House Forte – that was our initiation to the region, little did Josephine and I know that we would return many years later?

All the children came home at the end of the summer term - Anthony had finished at school and took up part-time work as an organist at the local church whilst cutting out a career as a rock group musician playing keyboard and composing. The girls were to go back to school as weekly borders. Helen, who had a serious allergy condition, was finding it very difficult to control the symptoms, even though she was religiously maintaining the course of treatment laid down by her doctors. Whatever was done to alleviate the problem the eczema persisted? I do not believe - at that time with the knowledge we had, we missed out any prescribed medical course of treatment or environmental change, to defeat the problem.

Josephine and I were asked to join a team in Hertfordshire to discuss and formulate a plan for the county if there were to be a nuclear attack. This was to last for a number of weeks and we were introduced to all the county's special fall-out shelters and emergency equipment. The lectures were eye-opening and very informative although quite frightening. It showed us how

expected an attack was thought to be and how prepared the country was to such a thing happening.

That year we flew to Venice, to take part in a conference – to the Danieli Hotel, where we sampled all the delights of that magical city plus a gondola ride and masked ball. On the return trip we took, the Orient Express back to Paris dressed in outfits representing the nineteen twenties.

My efforts in the garden at Tinkers Hey was beginning to show – the trees were now minus their suckers and the broken branches lopped and the grass was cut in sculptured heights to give variation

That summer we took by car Flo and Iris, plus Rebecca and the girls, to Warner's holiday camp on the Isle of Wight - although arriving in a thunderstorm was not on the cards at all. It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience having such a diverse group who were all mucking in - using every camp facility to get the most out of the experience – I must say that we all enjoyed the dances in the evenings and to see Flo and Iris doing the conga was an event not to be missed.

One of Josephine's clients owned a property in Spain. He was a builder wanted to sell up and offered the house and its furniture to us. It was for just over fifty thousand pounds, had all the usual accommodation plus use of the community pool, and was almost new. It was located not far from Alicante near to Altea and Polop de la Marina and close to a golf course called Bernia Golf. We spent a delightful holiday there and decided to buy it using our imagination to furnishing it, planning how we would alter the layout, and wondering whether the girls would like to spend their holidays there.

Anthony's band was performing in pubs and halls in the Watford area trying to penetrate the closed shop of the few really well attended venues. His composing became perhaps his greatest

strength, which gave the band its individuality - a sound within the category of American Rock music.

Josephine again succeeded in achieving a place at the next convention venue held in Athens where we, throughout the week, took in all the well-known archaeological sights. We extended the week to fly to Egypt and the Aswan dam to sail back down the Nile past Karnack on the Nile Queen.

We decided that for the time being at least the girls should stay at their school in Buckingham. To accommodate their request to be weekly borders we would move nearer to the school. We consulted Estate Agents both to look for a property and to place ours on the market. Whilst this was in progress, Josephine continued her work, which took her on a regular basis to London.

On arriving, back home from Spain we continued to look for possible homes near to the girl's school at Buckingham. Our own sale was proving to be difficult. We just did not have many viewings and the market proved to be slow.

Whilst all this was going on, we organized a trip out to Altea for the girls and Chris in which we all piled into my Honda Accord to motor all of the way. It was a challenge to drive that far and live off the land in so far that we did not previously book up places to stay but took potluck. As it turned out it was thoroughly enjoyable and we all have to see something of Spain as well as our house in Bernia Golf. The girls sampled donkey riding and the delights of the pool, strolling around Altea whilst taking in the local atmosphere, and taking the lemon express train up the coast.

This was the time of Conservative rule under Margaret Thatcher [1979 – 1990]. It was about free markets, reducing public spending, privatization, monetary control - a union jack, flag-waving society that applauded self-help - each individual

looking after their own interests regarding education, pension, health, and long-term care. It brought about trade union reform – outlawing secondary picketing, made inroads into the eventual banning of closed shops; they made unions legally liable for infringements to negotiated settlements, promoted regular election of union leaders, and made it public knowledge about union funds donated to political bodies. It was all a means to limit the strength of the trades union. This assisted by a reduction in union membership brought about by mass unemployment. Together these all made the conservative governments position stronger.

Halfway through Thatcher's reign the miner's strike took place, which lasted a year? She had been very secretive about the amount of planning which had gone ahead of the strike to hoard large stocks of coal at all the generating stations. About the same time, the print unions stripped of their power by the move from Fleet Street to Wapping – by forcibly changing their working practices.

Maxwell created a massive print and communication business, taking over and stripping out - laying off redundant workers. Unemployment was at its peak in 1986 with three point four million workers out of work. At the end of this period, the public held the conservative government responsible for the inflation that was rife.

That summer Chris and I painted the outside of Tinkers Hey whilst the girls cycled round and round us making Chris furious because they were getting in the way. We had our breaks sharing a convivial smoke in the garden shed with a cup of coffee. It was a very happy period and a great deal done to the garden to make it all more attractive. One of the ways I thought would improve the vista was to cut a gate shaped hole in the high hedge, which surrounded the garden. This had the effect to give

the impression that the garden extended further down the valley. Trees lopped and the lawn shaped by allowing different heights of grass to grow; the garden took on a very different appearance.

CHAPTER IV

Taking on another family – We all get on – Weekly borders - Live nearer the school - Thornborough – College Farm - Freelance Studio – Waterways – Chance for early retirement - Ruff - Conventions – Financial services abroad – Andalucia Properties – Trevor Dine – Sir Joshua Hassan – A place in the sun – Selling home – Setting-up in Spain – Jersey Directors.

College Farm

As in all house sales things eventually do click and a buyer found; which was just as well as we had seen the near perfect property in Thornborough, a village close to the school and not far from the shops at Buckingham. The owner was a most successful free-lance Graphic Designer. The property had three stables, a tack room, photographic darkroom, outside toilet facilities; a garage complex built under an imposing studio with the latest designer furniture and equipment reached by an open wooden staircase. It was in three acres, a paddock, which sheep grazed, and a thatched cottage, which led off the gravelled drive, which practically circled the house.

A College of Oxford University originally owned the farm. It was seventy-two foot long, thatched with stone built walls with mullioned windows with leaded glass, bread oven and inglenook and the latest fitted kitchen in bleached oak with a beautiful fire engine red aga. The whole house was carpeted in a deep red velvet pile and the curtains in matching velvet. It was a most

attractive house positioned on the edge of a village close to a stream.

The studio complex gave Josephine all that she needed for a workplace at home - I had my eye on the cottage to convert into a studio for myself. We bought it and that May we moved in, the girls each having a bedroom of their own whilst Chris could have the remaining bedroom on those occasions he felt he needed to – school vacations – continuing to be a full border at Aldenham for his final year.

In January 1986, I went skiing for the first time with Josephine who was a previous skier. I was forty-eight and not expecting to take on a new hobby, which was to last for so many years and prove to be an annual delight. Josephine had won the right to be at the Hill Samuel Convention in Zermatt, Switzerland, for Financial Advisers who had achieved a high status in business sales. It was at this time that Josephine had developed effective business links with executive search consultants, Overton Shirley & Barry.

The resort was lovely – no cars or trucks just horse drawn sleighs with the musical bells jingling from their harnesses. The Matterhorn was the back-drop to most ski runs and the pistes were lined by fir trees laden down by the snow which sloped down to typically alpine style log houses.

There were many who had not skied before and so instructors were organized to take us through our paces. It was all so new and exciting and fortunately, I advanced to the next class very quickly. It will be ever etched upon my mind how wonderful that week was. The venue was splendid being a top class resort free from cars having as its only transport horse drawn sleighs. The accommodation at the hotel was a delight being typically Tyrolean – made of wood in the Swiss style – the snow was

terrific that year and the weather sunny and warm – what an introduction to a wonderful sport.

When we arrived home, I started up my freelance design business in the small cottage on the drive. It was planned to give a specialist treatment in stationary design, menus, and show cards. My first client was the solicitors Horwood and James and soon after that was finished a restaurant in Buckingham wanted menus and cards.

Josephine's next convention held in Miami and Boca. We flew out on Concord, as a special prize, to Washington, and I must say that it was a tremendous experience being whisked through the air at over twice the speed of sound in such luxury – then onwards to Miami by specially chartered jet. It was there that guests who had an interest in other countries other than England were invited by the Hill Samuel Management to fill in a questionnaire stating what their interests were in that country and whether they would like to expand their own business there – to be an advance guard and prepare the ground for Financial Services. Josephine complied highlighting our house in Spain and setting out a plan to start a business - demonstrating that most wealthy people populate southern Spain in the region of Gibraltar where they could not only fly in but also converse in English, play golf and feel more connected to home.

Little did we know at the time that that was just what the management was looking for - an opening into the Spanish peninsular, Portugal and Gibraltar and someone who had the expertise and knowledge to back it up?

The Financial Industry was going through one of its boom periods expanding across all markets. There was at that time no local agencies in the peninsular catering for ex-patriots – they had to fly back home to secure further business contracts and

products so it was deemed to be a prime target for investment banks.

The Hill Samuel management sent round a list asking for members of staff who held connections on the continent and who wished to pursue those contacts in a business-associated way to place their names forward. Josephine entered her name stating that she owned a house in Spain, had existing clients out there who needed her to service them, and knew of others who were talking about becoming expatriates.

Very quickly, her offer was taken up and a business plan was formed. She was to go out to Spain set up her own base, which would enable her to service and sell new products to new and existing clients from the border of southern France and Spain right round the coast into Portugal, taking in the financial centre of Gibraltar. Although there were a few existing salespeople there already they were not on a par with Josephine's status and would come under her jurisdiction. In effect this didn't alter anything because in reality it was accepted that what the management were aware of was that it was from Malaga to Gibraltar which was the main area to concentrate on.

At the time, there was a boom in house purchase on the coast. New owners had to be aware about existing tax systems, holiday home purchase, lets, local inheritance taxes, off-shore banking, portfolio management, capital gains, wealth and income taxes and how planning should involve the local laws and lawyers. Although these are not within the remit of Josephine's need to know skills, she had to be aware of such essentials. The International Money Show in Marbella was a venue she had to attend to represent the company.

Now you can imagine what all that meant. We had to sell both the house in northern Spain and College Farm; then sort out how the children were going to fit in to the grand scheme; once

all that had been worked out, parcel-up everything perhaps for perhaps the rest of our lives - to be spent in Spain. In some ways it was opportune moment for all of us we were all at a turning point.

There was the businesses to consider particularly seeing that Josephine's clients were fully serviced by her two advisers who also had to be thought about – where they were going to work from and just how they were going to service the existing client bank.

We had a pow-wow with the girls to see what they thought about the idea. Anna, the youngest at thirteen, was all for it even though it would mean that she would have to learn another language. She wanted to get away from her existing school and to be at home all the time.

Helen was seventeen and in her first year at the Ivan Norvello Drama School in Littlewick Green, Buckingham after turning down a place at the Northern Drama College. She was lodged close to the school and wanted to see her time out and progress her chosen acting career. We had many long and detailed discussions about what she wanted to do. She had had her mind made up many years before, whilst at Arts Educational, about 'going on the stage' and nothing would change her mind - to keep on with the performers group rather than the drama teacher's-course. Taking this course would have given her an added qualification more in keeping with her potential – a practical course to stand her in good stead for the rest of her working life. If skill and luck had played a greater part giving her acting career how much better to have the insurance of a teachers qualification as well?

Although she was not keen to see us going abroad was determined enough not to give up her goal and was very

dedicated in all that she did. Her essays were always closely researched and documented.

Anthony was well set on continuing to make his mark in the music world now that the band had been formed and were playing at local venues. He would no longer use our home as a base but operate from Watford. Whilst combining working for the Royal Automobile Club, on a part-time basis to bring in extra cash, whilst progressed his musical career.

Christopher had by now left school with his 'A' levels and looking forward to starting work with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International immediately after leaving school – an introduction managed by Josephine with Chris Johnson at the bank.

Whilst all these other considerations met, Anna continued at Charmandean School. Her teachers believed she was best off there. We went along with that decision for the time being simply because there are so many other things going on at the same time and we knew that it was only going to be for a short period.

One of Josephine's clients had a litter of puppies. She happened to mention that I might be interested in one to the owner who contacted me to see when I would like to have a look at the puppy. I went round to enquire what it was they required. Of course I was captivated by the only one remaining – the runt of the litter which was a bitch. I was somehow landed with this decision and as it turned out a wonderful moment because it was a turning point something living 'of my own' to look after. I resolved to have it there and then.

When I got back home, I hid the puppy in my studio waiting for the morning when I would show her off. I had made up my mind that I would call it Ruff after its wonderful white fur collar around its neck. I showed off the puppy the next morning

to Josephine having Ruff in the pocket of my dressing gown with her head just peeping out

She was an immediate success with the girls when they came home that weekend. Their first job was to make a home for her out of a cardboard box - with her name boldly written on the front. After training, which only took a few weeks, Ruff became a main player in the scheme of things – never left out of anything. She would wait patiently for the mail carrier on the stairs every day and thereafter follow me everywhere never needing a lead but walking at my heel.

That Christmas 1986, Simon and Rebecca stayed in the coach house studio; Anthony was out in the photographic darkroom Chris and the girls upstairs. It was a crowded house and it took all our joint efforts to see that they were all fed and watered.

Shortly after moving into College Farm, I retired from teaching, after writing myself out of the job. To be offered an enhanced pension at the same time as early retirement I had to write to the college establishment setting out how my job had become redundant through advanced technology... the plan then was to start my own design studio, working from home.

The girls became weekly borders now that I was home for good. The plan was to make them daygirls as soon as practical - when we were settled into life at Thornborough. Every Friday I would pick them up from school bring them home to start their weekend. Their washing was put in the machine to be washed and dried ready to be ironed for Sunday – to start all over again. Homework got out of the way on Saturday and any other preparation made. Helen's allergies prompted special care in such things as food preparation and her eczema made it imperative dust was kept to a minimum.

Initially all went well with my design studio having a number of commissions to look after but it soon became apparent that to try to look after the property - having a number of outhouses, a garden and paddock of three acres - mostly of grass, do the shopping in Buckingham and cook, whilst looking after the girls at the weekends - which entailed picking them up on a Friday then taking them back on Sunday... all took up a great deal of time – especially those things for school having to be done to fit a certain time scale... the weeks went by very quickly...

It was too much, and something had to change - to make it all work smoothly. If the girls were to become daygirls, my freelance work would have to be restricted or stopped altogether.

It was that spring 1987 that we had a tremendous thunderstorm which carried on for many hours – the rain pouring down... flooding the surrounding fields and lanes. The stream down the road was swollen to the extent that you could not walk over the bridge. The ground quickly became saturated and the ditches and land drains could not cope with the sudden flash flood. The water ran down the garden and found its way into the house - through the large living room and into the under-floor heating system... soaking the carpets as the water flowed through. It became essential to dig out a land drain across the lawn, lay a large perforated pipe, linking into the existing drainage system..., which took the water to the stream.

We employed a husband and wife team two days a week – Fred and Lorna. Fred concentrated on the garden and paddock, who was now going to help me dig out, and lay the pipes for the new land-drain... he was then to follow on and do some ditching and hedge laying; Lorna's job was to 'do' the usual - in the house. The stables and Josephine's office were very much my preserve, which, coupled with my own studio work and the front garden

was a continuous round of maintenance. Later we had the builders in to lay a brick terrace and patch up the studio roof, which was leaking...

I could not keep up with all the normal day-to-day events – my own business would have either to stop or take a back seat. It was very fortunate that Josephine was going from strength to strength and loving it. Having a secure base allowed her to expand and develop the business taking on two Advisers to work from the same office in the large studio, which was big enough to accommodate them.

The other string to my bow was painting a range of dog portraits to display at country fairs – to seek commissions. Whilst the pictures were finished, the ultimate aim not fulfilled... I was offered the job of resident portrait painter at Champney's Health Farm near Tring. I was delighted to accept... this being a feather in my cap - likely to be a source of many commissions. Soon after starting the job I was commissioned to paint Champney's, for presentation as a print to retiring members of staff. The original hung in the hotel library... the painting later adapted for greeting cards and notelets. It was a very busy time travelling backwards and forwards... on call - for residents. I had an art exhibition for The Waterways Commission - held in a gallery in Buckingham - ten pictures associated with the canals and workings. Thelma and Roger, Sally's brother and sister in law, wanted some stylish notepaper and business cards incorporating a couple of animal pictures for their kennels and cattery. A design, depicting their own breed of dog, used for many years right up to the time the kennels were sold on - many years later.

A partnership with Sue, a local builder of houses and property conversions, in and around Milton Keynes, was a near run thing until a discussion with Duncan - my best man, and building surveyor, involved the conversion of a chapel in

Buckingham, close to the university... to convert into three separate houses. However, the proposed move to Spain cut across all those ideas and they never happened, which was perhaps just as well. Duncan went ahead with the project himself and found that it was indeed a profitable undertaking. So the decision made... we were to move to Spain. Now everything was a-buzz, we had so much to do but first we had to sell our properties, the one already in Spain - but in the wrong place, and look into buying a house close to Gibraltar as well as find a school for Anna.

Flo and Iris had been persuaded to move house – to be near the sea, closer to Flo's other daughter. This was unfortunate for they would have been better off staying where they were. However, it was an opportune happening for us - the house was ideal for Anthony and Chris. They managed to secure a joint mortgage; and after the ladies had left work started almost immediately to convert the house - to separate the upstairs from the lower portion to give the boy's their own patch whilst sharing the bathroom and kitchen. The house was completely redecorated, carpeted with curtains made and hung. A new kitchen and bathroom installed and plumbed in. The whole venture was a success and came at just the right time.

In June 1987, the annual convention for high achievers was held in Barbados at Sam Lords Castle. This was my first visit to the Caribbean to see for myself how poor the inhabitants were and how meagre the job prospects. Paradise Beach with its dingy sailing and snorkelling, shell collecting, barbecues and dancing at night on the beach were all romantic and given special appeal knowing that life back home was going to be hectic as well as exciting.

My brother Stan, now retired, was just about coming to terms with his affliction to the extent that he was looking to

spend the rest of his life abroad in a warmer climate. He discussed his position and his hopes for the future with us and I think concluded that perhaps Spain provided all that he was looking for. When Josephine and I went out to Spain in the summer of 1986, we invited Stan to come along and sample Spanish life by staying at our house in Bernia Golf, Altea.

We were planning to sell our house in Spain but it would not do for Stan - he was looking for a bungalow – built on flat land that would take a wheel chair... with two bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom, and hopefully, a swimming pool. As the object was to be self sufficient - relying on his pensions to provide for Pauline and Tim, the project had to be kept to a very tight budget. A property, which would not require all his savings, was the order of the day.

These specifications almost demanded a new development in an out-of-town location. Considering his health and the obvious benefits of being in a hot, dry climate Spain was the simple choice, especially at that moment: when the coastal regions were being developed and incoming capital from foreign speculators and the European Economic Union were bolstering up the Spanish economy.

That visit convinced Stan that what he was doing was right. Within a space of a year he and Pauline and Tim were on their way out to start life afresh - new horizons and challenges, leaving behind a number of bad memories and unfortunate experiences.

David had not long finished his Honours Degree at Middlesex Polytechnic - soon to start work as a supply teacher; he later took a teacher training course at Roehampton and applied to take up a position as a lecturer in English at a further education college in Epsom. This he succeeded in doing and once there continued seeking further qualifications by reading a Masters Degree course in Linguistics.

Ruth was working part-time in Harrow after working in a florists and Benjamin was at Safeway's supermarket. Just after Christmas Ben had to go to hospital - have a course of antibiotics to cure a viral infection. It was not long out of hospital that he decided to return to education and read an Honours Degree course in Computer Programming.

Rebecca started a two-year part-time course at The Birch Walthen School, New York, studying acting and stage management. After Easter, she took a Greyhound Bus trip round America and in June visited her friend Mrs Harrison in Oakland, California returning to New York mid-summer. She read a critique of Anthony's rock group, Romeo's Daughter's first album in a British music magazine called 'Q' they believed that it was very commercial and should do well.

When Rebecca finished her first year college course in July, she took on the job as host in a restaurant. She took the opportunity whilst there to visit friends in Long Island. The morning post bought her a hoped for interview at Queen Mary College London to read History the following year in an Honours Degree course. She then flew back to attend the interview and to spend some time in England.

Josephine and I went back out to Bernia Golf to put the house on the market and to settle any financial matters whilst there. Helen and Anna, Rebecca and Christopher came along too - so we made a bit of a holiday of it. This time we motored out although a bit of a squeeze got us there in style. They were fascinated by the experience and the time went all too quickly before having to do an about-turn and head back.

On Sunday the 12th May 1987, Josephine and I flew out to Malaga in southern Spain. We had to find a house, look into a suitable school for Anna, and perhaps find a business location - it was important not to make a mistake for time was short and we

could not afford to have to keep flying out on doubtful promises. On arriving back, Josephine had to make a report to the London office to update the Directors – telling them when she was going back - be there permanently. Shortly we set out again...

We had seen an advertisement for properties for sale in Spain... one in particular - at a gated estate called Sotogrande – on the coast in sight of Gibraltar, with Andalucia Properties... It was to them that we intended to make our first call, having alerted them to our needs by phone.

Having never been to the area before had no idea of the area. Hiring a car, at Malaga Airport, drove down the coast road towards Estapona and Gibraltar... hoping to find a suitable base to begin our search... made for the Estate Agents.

Having taken a morning flight... found us driving past San Pedro, Calpe - about midday... Noticing a group of people standing outside a small chapel - next to a school... our interest aroused - for they looked very English. It turned out that the building was the coastal English Mission Hall, and they were indeed part of the English community... We parked the car and introduced ourselves...

The wife of the resident pastor was the first to introduce her. She asked, 'had we come to the morning service?' We exclaimed, 'that we hadn't but would... following behind, into the hall...

The service was very familiar and thankfully short. After, as we were walking out, she invited us and others back to the pastor's house for lunch... during which we voiced our quest: to find a home close to Gibraltar, and, English speaking school - for our daughter.

The Pastor and his wife, Walter and Beryl Vane, had been working at the mission for five years and lived in a delightful bungalow close to the mission hall. Walter taught mathematics in

both English and Spanish schools whilst Beryl found personal fulfilment as a social councillor for the church authority. We could not have found a perfect couple to put us at our ease... They remained great friends: Walter at one time Anna's mentor – teaching her in the evenings to attain the next grade in mathematics... Beryl, a councillor, and friend to Anna - when Anna sought an English university... She remains one of my few unforgettable and dear friends.

Their advice was to seek out Trevor Dine of Andalusia Properties, Sotogrande... where we had been heading, and, to look into the possibilities of Anna becoming a pupil of St Jose in Estapona where, Walter exclaimed, "The very best education in the region could be found - of a high standard - teaching the Baccalaureate curriculum." The education, he believed, compared to the best English public school standard... it was where he taught English so knew the school intimately, particularly the high degree of discipline.

St. Jose was a fee-paying private school, with an accepted high educational achievement rating. With the lunch, served by Beryl, being absolutely mouth watering, the company positively charming, plus having perfect advice, from, as it were, 'the horse's mouth...' we were delighted we had taken the trouble to stop.

That evening we stopped on the outskirts of Estapona at an apartment in a rental block of flats - to get in a goodnight's sleep, ready for an exciting day ahead. We had not been forewarned that the nights could get so cold - not having any extra blankets, we had a restless night, eventually waking to blue skies, penetrating sun and a not very good breakfast of just corn-flakes. I was never able to acclimatise myself to the Spanish style of interior house decoration. Everything was bright and hard –

no curtains or carpets, shutters, blinds, very heavy furniture and the minimum of soft furnishings.

The following day we set off only to find out that the property agency closed on Mondays. However, we drove to the estate to find the house ourselves. When we arrived, there was a note pinned to the door, inviting us to meet the firm's sales manager John Reece? He turned out to be both kind and thoughtful showing us round the house, which in fact was a three bedroomed bungalow set in ample grounds with a pool. The price was one hundred and seventy five thousand pounds. John showed us round two others which although suitable we settled for the original - the first property viewed.

That night we stayed with John and Margaret Reece - sharing their evening meal, during which, came to know far more about the whole nature of the building site, its history, the type of properties constructed and how developed.

On Tuesday 14th May, we meet Trevor Dine – another acquaintance who became a great friend, all the time we lived in Spain. It was then that we declared ourselves interested in buying the property. It was convenient to have all the necessary expertise in just one place - to advise and arrange that we should buy the property through a Gibraltar Company, the building of additional living space, garage, and driveway, have on hand Spanish speaking staff to ease the transactions and paperwork...

Sotogrande was similar to a gated suburb of California, where each property has at least a third of an acre, all painted white, immaculate lawns, palm trees, cactus, bougainvillea and azaleas, the obligatory swimming pool, terracotta roman tiles and grilled doors and windows – typically Spanish architecture using many painted tiles and natural stone. All this was set on the coast with it's: two golf courses, three polo fields, shopping arcade,

marina, tennis club, private beach and sports club. The whole estate guarded and patrolled by uniformed guards day and night.

A leading company of lawyers based in Gibraltar and headed by Sir Joshua Hassan, onetime prime minister of Gibraltar, engaged to see to the rights of purchase. They introduced us to a subsidiary company who sold companies for property transfer and purchase.

This whole week spent with John Reece and his wife. They were kind enough to show us round the vast Sotogrande estate formed by an American before the Second World War... pointing out the polo grounds, marina, small shopping arcade and the areas that were to become two new golf courses. It was very much like a middle-class area of Florida - gracious houses and bungalows set in beautiful gardens with tree lined roads. The port and marina of Sotogrande was still under construction, as was the marina La Duquesa - further up the coast towards Estapona.

We visited San Jose - the school, and spoke with the Headmaster and the English tutor asking what the position was for new entrants - the entry procedure, the cost, what the uniform consisted of and what books to be supplied by the parents. The Headmaster handed us an application form and a detailed brochure telling us about the school: its foundation - its aims and objectives and answering all our many questions. I must say we were most impressed by the school and the system. What he did say was that if we were considering sending Anna to his school we would have to get her existing qualifications certified so that she could be slotted into the Spanish system comparable with her then existing standard - that could only be done by somebody who was au fait with each county's educational system. For instance, the Ministry of Education attached to the Spanish Embassy in London.

When we got back to England our Estate Agent in Spain rang us up to say that he had a buyer who was a local businessman - ran a computer shop in Buckingham – and would be making an offer. This he did and we received a fair price although we had to contribute half towards having the roof re-thatched. You can well imagine what our waking time was involved with for this whole period was most exciting. The possibilities were enormous and the scope boundless. We were so pleased that we had found a buyer and that the sale was all going ahead so smoothly.

To make the move abroad secure for Anna, I took out adoption papers. The object was to declare a moral responsibility to her and for her – demonstrating, in an outwardly legal fashion, that I would be her guardian and keeper. She was enthusiastic with the prospect. To further incorporate our children, Josephine and I kept our own surnames. We believed that by so doing, our children would retain their identity.

It was a strange feeling to know that within a short space of time Anna and I would be in Spain... not as holiday makers or for a short break but as residents... there to stay... perhaps for good.

It seemed such a long time ago that I had left sixty-eight to take up residence at Leighton Cottages. All the heartaches and sadness, the lack of money and the stress of trying to pay maintenance. It had been my hope that some of the younger children would have come round and stayed. That did not happen, in fact some of the children had only been there that once, whilst others had never seen the place. I had been told that at the outset I would never have believed it. So much for Rita's opinion and my planning...?

Now, just five years later, I was off to sunny climes. So many things had happened, so many new friends and experiences.

And there was more to come. Whilst Josephine continued working from the London offices of Hill Samuel, I planned, sorted and packed - to move out of College Farm. It was no good being sentimental about the vast number of things that had to be put away, given away, and discarded; there was nowhere to store the excess. As it was, the removal van was likely to be overloaded.

The month before the girls left school, June 1987, the place was a scene of chaos to get things done. Everything had to be packed and loaded ready for what was left of the family to take up residence with Graham Hawes in Tring, who had kindly suggested putting us up until the day of moving.

Once we had moved out we marked time, the days seemed long for we didn't have all our things around us – we were held in limbo. Gradually time passed and the appointed hour arrived. The box bought from the vets to house Ruff was assembled and Anna and I, driven by Josephine, made out way to Luton Airport, to mount the steps, carrying Ruff in her box, into the plane. Our adventure was about to begin...

Looking back on what had happened to me over the period since leaving North Harrow I had been exceptionally lucky. If I had stayed at Leighton Cottage in my then single state, it is still unlikely that anyone of the children would have taken up residence with me. It is true that my financial state would have improved but being in the area close to all the happenings of sixty-eight, I would have been involved in more heartache and unhappiness.

Now I had a new life with far reaching potential. As I prepared to fly out to Spain, what was being planned could have had far reaching possibilities. The fact that these hopes were not completely filled did not matter for Josephine was not the sort of person to just sit back and allow doom and despondency to reign. I too would have taken full time employment to augment the

family finances. As it was, it wasn't necessary good fortune followed in our wake. There is absolutely no doubt that Anna benefited from the hard work and dedication asked of her. She achieved her goal and made full use of the opportunity. That she had other stresses to contend with is part of life's rich pattern... who escapes those? Those of the children, who had worked hard - to achieve qualifications either immediately after secondary education or later, gave themselves greater opportunity to find higher paid work and permanent employment. Those who did not suffered the extra worry of being at the mercy of the general economy and the whims of management.

An individual's life has not become easier but has changed by emphasis. Man's onetime security and power has been greatly reduced. Women have secured for themselves greater voice and rights. Children have suffered from less security and the caring hand of a gentler style of upbringing - forced to assume greater responsibilities, to cope with the perniciousness of consumer advertising, and having to differentiate between salacious media coverage and true sexual freedom. They have not been offered the multitudinous offerings of the many youth clubs and associations that were at onetime available. It is they who have suffered most from our new labour society.